

det - signed by Robert S. Todd
(Matthew Miller)

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Curios and Relics

Furniture

Desk

Owned by Robert S. Todd

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the

Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN NEWSLETTER



VOLUME II, NUMBER 3

LINCOLN, ILLINOIS

OCTOBER, 1981

What Next Mr. Lincoln?

by Paul Beaver

I can hardly wait for Mr. Lincoln's birthday to arrive. No, not because we will all be given the day off — for anyone who works in the Lincoln field never really has the day "off."

The reason for my near breathless anticipation is the desire to know what strange and wonderous (here-to-fore) known facts are going to be brought to light concerning the life and times of poor Mr. Lincoln.

Consider the seemingly endless parade of revelations that have been sprung upon us in the recent past. I do sometimes wonder if editors call bright eyed young reporters into their offices in early January and tell them to come up with a "new and different" angle on the "Lincoln story." Are they also told not to get bogged down in the drudgery of research or the complications of facts. Is the mandate rather, "never let facts get in the way of a good story." Looking over some of these "exposes," many of which first saw the light of day in popular "supermarket" publications, one is inclined to believe that with Lincoln anything sensational beats factual reporting any day.

Mr. Lincoln has suffered, according to these accounts; a variety of often rare and exotic maladies. Among these medical problems were included the Marfans Syndrome, chronic depression, and venereal disease.

Only the area of depression merits any credibility, but not to the point some writers would like to go—that of claiming that this problem of depression plagued him constantly in the White House, even to the point of rendering him almost powerless to make certain critical decisions.

Marfans Syndrom, with its characteristic of a weak, spiderly body has been completely discredited by nearly all scholars. The current Lincoln rumor is basically the product of the author, Gore Vidal, who is contending that Lincoln suffered from venereal disease contracted by Lincoln between 1935-1836. Vidal uses William Herndon as his source of information, claiming that Herndon was told the story by Lincoln himself. Lincoln scholars in general place little credence in this report.

James T. Hickey, curator of the Lincoln collection for the *Illinois State Historical Library*, maintains that Lincoln was such a private person when discussing his personal life it is highly unlikely that he would have confided in Herndon or anyone about such a personal matter. EVEN IF IT HAD OCCURRED!

Hickey, Ralph Newman, Dr. Mark Neely (Director of the Louis A. Warren Collection, Lincoln National Life Insurance Corporation) and your author were together recently, and discovered that all had been the recipients of dozens of inquiries on Vidal's claim. Most were asking for an answer of "say it isn't so"!

All of the above reached the rather easy conclusion that indeed it was not. No doubt it will continue to surface as does the Marfan story.

Sunday's papers brought yet another bit of "unknown Lincolniana." In the September 27, 1981 issue of Parade magazine in a section entitled, "Significia," was an article dealing with the supposed rivalry between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas for the hand of Mary Todd.

Among the "facts" to be found in the story are the following. "Her family hoped

she would choose Douglas, a lawyer who, like Mary, had ambition and social standing." "By late 1840, Mary and Lincoln were engaged. Once when Lincoln arrived late at a party, he found Mary flirting animatedly with Douglas. Within a few days, Lincoln broke their engagement." What Next Mr. Lincoln!

Lincoln scholars find no evidence that Mary's family preferred Douglas, or anyone else, over Lincoln. The old tale that Lincoln had little ambition is just that, an old tale. Even Herndon mentioned Lincoln's ambition and Lincoln's own letters point to his very real ambition from the days of the Illinois State Legislature to the Presidency.

The break with Mary Todd did occur, but there is no evidence that even remotely suggests that Douglas had anything at all to do with it. WHAT NEXT, MR. LINCOLN?

Was it just yesterday that I sat in our local movie emporium to watch in living technicolor an incredible story that insisted that a Mr. Boyd and not JOHN WILKES BOOTH shot Abraham Lincoln.

Not only that but I was shown that all sorts of conspiracies abounded in Lincoln's cabinet and high government offices. I was privileged to hear the distinguished Lincoln scholar, Harold Hyman, lay this story to rest at a Abraham Lincoln Association affair in Springfield a winter or two ago—Really, Mr. Lincoln, What Next?

And so I breathlessly await that first call. I can hear the caller now. "Could you confirm this Lincoln story for me—we have reason to believe that Lincoln was really in the employ of the Confederate Secret Service—What Next Mr. Lincoln?"

THE LINCOLN NEWSLETTER



LINCOLN COLLEGE
Lincoln, Illinois 62656

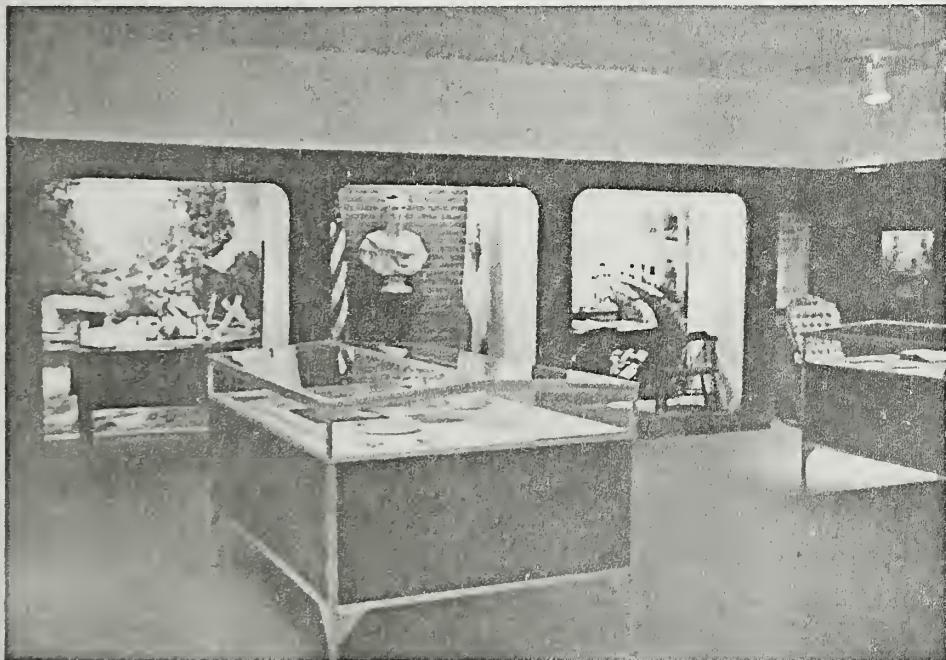
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RAILSPLITTING FESTIVAL HUGE SUCCESS

The annual Logan County Abraham Lincoln National Railsplitting Festival completed a very successful weekend affair on September 19 & 20.

Lincoln College Campus was again the site of the event which features a large craft fair (over 200 different groups or individuals demonstrated their special crafts.)

The College Museum hosted some 1,000 visitors during the weekend festival which concluded with a National Railsplitting Contest on Sunday afternoon.



LINCOLN MUSEUM

Pictured are some of the displays featured in the Lincoln Museum on the campus here at Lincoln College.

Lincoln from All Over

by Paul Beaver

James T. Hickey, curator of the Lincoln Collection for the Illinois State Historical Library reports that Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith, Abraham Lincoln's last decendent, has made several gifts recently which completes the disposition of the Beckwith (Lincoln) material. The Louis A. Warren Collection, Lincoln National Life Insurance, was given a cordial set belonging to President and Mrs. Lincoln and a chair from the Lincoln White House very similar to the one displayed in the Lincoln College Museum.

An original desk from the Robert S. Todd (Mary Todd Lincoln's father) home in Lexington, Kentucky was returned to the restored Todd home; now called the Mary Todd Lincoln Home.

Sang Sale

Sotheby Parke Bernet in New York announces what is thought to be the final sale of the Phillip Sang Collection of Lincolniana and Americana on Friday, December 4, at 2:00 p.m. This sale, as have the past sales, will be held in the New York Galleries of Sotheby's. At this writing no catalog is yet available of what is to be offered. One item always seems to command the attention of both Forbes Magazine and the New York media. Forbes has made many "news worthy" purchases in past sales.

Neely Honored

Dr. Mark Neely, Head of the Louis A. Warren Collection, was honored with a doctorate from Lincoln College at the College's fall Convocation.

The Convocation was held in Kelso Hollow at New Salem State Park. This convocation was in recognition of Lincoln's entry into New Salem 150 years ago. Neely, a recognized Lincoln scholar, was joined on the speakers stand by Alan J. Dixon, United States Senator from Illinois.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following articles are the work of our contributing Editor RICHARD E. SLOAN of New York. Richard published *The Lincoln Log* for many years on his own and now has joined our publication as a contributing editor.

LINCOLN CELEBRATIONS—Lincoln's birthday isn't always celebrated in February. It will be celebrated in HODGENVILLE, KENTUCKY on October 10th and 11th, with a parade, a railsplitting contest, games, foods, an Arts & Crafts show, and other activities emphasizing the Lincoln theme. Arts & Crafts show, and other activities emphasizing the Lincoln theme. (Last year, 8,000 folks watched the parade!) There will be an art show, with prizes to winners. A Lincoln look-a-like contest will also be held, with the winner getting to march at the head of the parade. Anyone interested in participating in the contests can get details from Lincoln Days Celebrations, P.O. Box 176, Hodgenville, Ky. 42748, or by calling 502-358-3411. * * * * A Lincoln look-a-like contest was a recent feature of "Lincolnfest," a celebration held this summer in Springfield, Illinois to commemorate Lincoln's move to the city 150 years ago. A ten-block area was set up with many displays (such as Thomas Dyba's 1/48 inch furnished scale model of Lincoln's home), a Mary Todd & Crafts fair, a carnival of ethnic foods, and the Lincoln look-a-like contest. (R.E.S.)

*Lincoln moved to New Salem 150 years ago, which can broadly be claimed as a part of the Springfield area (Editor's note).

FORMER LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CHIEF DIES—Noted Lincoln scholar David C. Mearns, 82, Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress from 1951 to 1967 (longer than any other occupant of that office) died May 21. Even after retirement, Mr. Mearns continued to serve as an honorary

